ESAFETY FOR CHILDREN

QUALITY AREA 2 | ELAA VERSION 1.4

Northern Bay College Early Learning Centre

PURPOSE

This policy provides guidelines for Northern Bay College Early Learning Centre to:

- provide a safe online environment for all children which ensures their safety, health and wellbeing
- support young children to develop an understanding of digital networks and to using digital networks in safe and appropriate ways
- incorporate digital technology into early learning environment in an age and developmentally appropriate and safe way
- support and communicate with families about safe online practices at home and in the community.

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Northern Bay College Early Learning Centreis committed to:

- the rights of all children to feel safe, and be safe at all times
- providing a safe environment through the creation and maintenance of a child safe culture, and this extends to the safe use of digital technologies and online environments
- fostering opportunities for each child to participate in the digital environment, express their views and to learn safely
- always acting in the best interests of each child and has zero tolerance of online abuse
- supporting families in creating a safe on-line environment both at home and at the service.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Northern Bay College Early Learning Centre.

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
1. Designating a staff member/s to champion online safety and be a first point of contact for early childhood	R	√			

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	teachers, educators, staff, parents/guardians and children to report online safety issues					
2.	Ensuring the online environment is used in accordance with *Code of Conduct, Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing, Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments, Privacy and Confidentiality and Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy*	R	R	√		√
3.	Early childhood teachers and educators engaged in professional learning about online safety (such as eSafety's professional learning modules) *(refer to Sources)*, enabling them to identify and mitigate the risks associated with being online	√	√	√		√
4.	Providing early childhood teachers and educators with regular opportunities to engage in ongoing, informal professional learning so they have up-to-date information about the risks and changing practices in online safety	√	√			
5.	Engaging in professional learning to build capacity and support the implementation of online safety education.	√	√	√		√
6.	Ensuring that early childhood teachers and educators are aware of and compliant with *Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments,* and *Privacy and Confidentiality policies*	R	R			
7.	Undertaking a risk assessment *(refer to Sources)* of all online tools (including AI), platforms, Smart Toys *(refer to Sources)*, and child-friendly search engines and apps prior to children's use	R	R	√		√
8.	Undertaking a risk assessment *(refer to Sources)* and identify if children's personal devices (including wearable devices) can be used at the service and in what circumstances.	R	R	√		√
9.	Considering risk management plans when engaging with third party contractors to assess whether, and the extent to which, the engagement of third-party contractors poses risks of child abuse and harm	R	R	√		√
10.	Ensuring safety procedures are developed and implemented when using digital communication platforms *(refer to Definitions)* with children and their families *(refer to Attachment 1)*	R	R	√		√
11.	Ensuring when using digital documentation platforms, early childhood teachers and educators consider the security of their digital data and the privacy of children and families *(refer to Privacy and Confidently Policy and Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments)*	R	R	√		√
12.	Ensuring that only service-issued digital devices should ever be used to take photos or record videos of children	√	√	√		√
13.	Installing and update safety and security software, internet filters, and pop-up blockers on all digital devices used at the service	√	√	√		√
14.	Ensuring there are procedures and processes around the capturing, storing and sharing of children's images and	R	R	√	√	√

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	videos *(refer to Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments and Privacy and Confidentiality policy)*					
15.	Creating a shared understanding between Northern Bay College Early Learning Centre, families, early childhood teachers and educators about digital technology use, by adults, in front of children	√	√	√	√	√
16.	Ensuring that appropriate filtering *(refer to Definitions)* and monitoring are in place for all devices used at the service	R	R	√		√
17.	Reviewing online safety education annually to identify strengths and weaknesses and update to ensure relevance to online safety issues, risks, and harms	R	√	√	√	√
18.	Ensuring parents/guardians are involved in the development and review of the *eSafety for Children Policy*	R	√		√	
19.	Providing families with information on where to go for help with online safety issues, including the eSafety Commissioner *(refer to Sources)*	√	√	√		√
20.	Regularly discussing concepts of 'being online' or 'the internet' and online safety with children *(refer to Sources)*		√	√	√	√
21.	Providing children with the opportunity to engage in digital play through communicating, creating and consuming digital content in safe and age-appropriate ways	√	√	√	√	√
22.	Providing proactive supervision and monitoring when young children are using digital technology *(refer to Supervision of Children policy)*	R	√	√	√	√
23.	Ensuring an online safety agreement is created in collaboration with children and families *(refer to Sources)*	√	√	√		
24.	Developing and implementing a digital learning environment and opportunities that are accessible to and relevant for all age groups	√	√	√		
25.	Using digital technologies to promote social interactions between children, peers and early childhood teacher/educators	√	√	√		
26.	Teaching digital citizenship *(refer to Definitions)* and digital/media literacy *(refer to Definitions)* to support critical thinking		√	√		√
27.	Developing social and emotional learning skills to support children' understanding and management of emotions, respectful online relationships and resilience		√	√		√
28.	Providing opportunities for children to explore and experiment with the functions of a diverse range of digital technologies *(refer to Definitions)* alongside adult modelling and instruction in digital technology use		√	√		√
29.	Considering the needs of all children including those with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, LGBTQI students, those from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, children experiencing family	R	√	√		√

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breakdown or in out of home care and others who may be more vulnerable and susceptible to online harms					
30. Modelling self-regulated *(refer to Definitions)* digital technology use with children and families that recognises the importance of sustained social interactions between children and adults		√	√		√
31. Respecting children and family's diversity and strive to meet their needs for online safety education inclusive of gender, age, culture, ability, appearance, socioeconomic status, family background, geographical location, and access	R	R	√	√	√
32. Ensuring processes are in place to ensure children and parents/guardian who speak languages other than English understand this policy	R	√			
33. Upholding children's rights to provision, participation and protection in digital environments	R	√	√		√
34. Create child-friendly guides or agreements for acceptable use of service issued devices *refer to Sources*	√	√	√		√
35. Teaching children they have the right to feel safe and say 'no' to anything that makes them feel unsure, uncomfortable, or unsafe	√	√	√		√
36. Identifying and responding to online safety risks, like grooming (being subjected to manipulative behaviours), cyberbullying, excessive use of devices and screen time, and inappropriate images *refer to Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy*	R	R	R		R
37. Being alert to potential signs of exposure to inappropriate material or online harm (e.g. changes in behaviour, secrecy)	R	R	√		√
38. Ensuring children know what to do if they encounter inappropriate materials online	R	√	√		√
39. Encourage children to talk to a trusted adult if they see or experience something online that makes them feel uncomfortable *(refer to Sources)*	√	√	√		√
40. Teaching children not to give out personal information such as their name, birthdate, address and image, online or that of others	√	√	√		√
41. Asking children their permission before taking photos or videos	√	√	√		√
42. Implementing the uses of technologies in everyday life and use real or imaginary technologies as props in children's play		√	√		√
43. Supporting the use of digital technologies *(refer to Definitions)* in the curriculum as tools for designing, drawing, editing, reflecting and composing		√	√		√
44. Modelling internet use with children for learning purposes and provide opportunities for assessing the quality and relevance of information.		√	√		√

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45. Providing opportunities for children to explore and experiment with the functions of a diverse range of digital technologies *(refer to Definitions)* alongside adult modelling and instruction in digital technology use.		√	√		√
46. Modelling active decision making regarding digital technology use with, by and for young children that provides a balance of digital and non-digital experiences and activities at the service		√	√		√
47. Providing digital technology experiences for young children that promote movement opportunities		√	√		√
48. Ensuring that screen-based digital technology *(refer to Definitions*) use while sitting is only for short periods and does not replace periods of active physical movement		√	√		√
49. Promoting postural awareness and change by providing a variety of spaces and heights for children to use digital technologies		√	√		√
50. Helping children develop self-regulation *(refer to Definitions)* for using digital technologies and support them to transition from digital to non-digital activities		√	√		√
51. Encouraging the use of digital technologies *(refer to Definitions)* in the curriculum for children to access images and information, explore diverse perspectives and make sense of their world		√	√		√
52. Teaching children skills and techniques that encourage them to use technologies to explore new information and represent their ideas.		√	√		√
53. Developing strategies for families to communicate negative experiences or concerns regarding online issues	**R**	**R**			
54. Supporting families to understand that exposure to disturbing or arousing content and screens in the hour before sleep time decreases the length and quality of children's sleep.	√	√	√		
55. Direct families towards government and/or not-for-profit organisations for advice and resources on controls and the selection of digital media, content, apps and games that are appropriate for use by young children *(refer to Sources)*	√	√	√		
56. Providing families with information about online safety and risks in the online environment, such as online grooming, cyber bullying and sexting.	R	R	R		√

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BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

Young children are growing up in a technological world and need to be supported to understand how technology works and the impact it has on their lives. Technology is now used by young children in early childhood services, and at home for gaming, socialising and learning. When used wisely technology can support children's learning and relationships. Enjoyable and engaging shared experiences that optimise the potential for children's learning and development can support children's relationships both with adults and their peers.

Creating a safe online environment for children is essential to ensure they can access digital technologies and online learning opportunities without risk. Children have the right to quality education and care in a secure environment, and this extends to the digital world. Approved providers and staff play a critical role in protecting, empowering, and educating children about online safety to prevent child maltreatment and abuse. With the rapid development of new technologies, it is vital to stay informed about potential risks, such as gaps in cybersecurity that could allow hackers to access devices and compromise children's safety. Supporting educators and children to understand both the benefits and dangers of digital technologies, and taking proactive steps to address emerging risks, is key to fostering a child safe culture and ensuring continuous improvement in online safety practices.

Educators are accustomed to working in partnership with families in many areas of children's development. Now that young children are growing up in digital contexts, it's also important for educators and families to work in partnership regarding the use of digital technologies with, by and for young children. An educator's role is not necessarily to teach children about the technology itself, but to create learning environments where educators and children think, talk and learn about technology and online safety together.

The Early Years Learning Framework (the Framework) was developed to extend and enrich children's learning from birth to five years. The Framework assists early childhood teachers and educators' in providing young children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success in learning. Outcome 4 of the Framework talks about how children are confident and involved learners. It encourages early learning services to introduce children to appropriate tools, technologies and media and provide the children with skills, knowledge and techniques to enhance their learning. Outcome 4 also states that children should experiment with different types of technologies to investigate, and problem solve.

Outcome 5 of the Framework talks about how children are effective communicators and provides guidance to early childhood teacher and educators in supporting children to use information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking.

That being the case, the early childhood sector plays an important role in supporting children's learning and development in relation to technology and staying safe online. Importantly, young children need to be provided the opportunity to learn about online safety and use technology in appropriate ways.

Young children and their families participate in digital contexts in different ways according to their access to digital technologies, the internet, and the views they hold about the role digital technology plays in their lives. Research indicates that internet access and digital technology is influenced by socioeconomic resources, geographic location, gender and age (Judge, Puckett & Cabuk, 2004). Families' beliefs and attitudes about digital technology also influence the access their children have to different types of digital technologies (Blackwell, Lauricella, Wartella, Robb & Schomburg, 2013). Therefore, the experience of growing up in digital contexts is not universally the same, as not every child and family will use, value or understand digital technologies in the same way. However, all children have the right to actively participate online, this includes the right to be heard, the right to be respected and the right to feel safe.

The Victorian Regulatory Authority requires approved providers to comply with the National Model Code. The National Model Code is crucial for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services to ensure the safety and privacy of children. Under the Code, only service-issued electronic devices should be used for taking photos or recording videos, thereby minimising the risk of unauthorised distribution of images. The Code states that clear guidelines are developed on carrying personal devices for specific essential purposes

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ensuring that any exceptions are justified and controlled. Additionally, implementing strict controls for storing and retaining images or recordings of children is vital to protect their privacy and prevent misuse of sensitive information. Adhering to these guidelines not only safeguards children but also fosters trust and transparency between ECEC services and families.

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Child Safe Standards
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics
- Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children Health and Safety and Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- Online Safety Act 2021
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy

Co-playing: When two or more children and/or an adult and child(ren) engage in play together, communicating about their actions, about the content, or interacting in any way.

Co-viewing: Occurs as two or more people view the same content together, promoting opportunity for conversation and communication about the content they are viewing.

Digital citizenship: Citizenship in digital contexts recognises that young children are active participants in their communities now and into the future

Digital communication platforms: video teleconferencing software program such as Zoom, Goggle Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Webex Meetings, Skype

Digital contexts: involve both actual access to digital technologies and the ways in which people think about and value the use of digital technologies in their lives.

Digital data: Information that is transmitted digitally, including (but not limited to) text, audio, images and video.

Digital documentation: Recording and analysing children's engagement and learning using digital tools. This can include photos, text and video and may be communicated via an online platform.

Digital literacy: The ability to identify and use technology confidently, creatively and critically to meet the demands and challenges of living, learning and working with digital technologies like internet platforms, social media, and mobile devices.

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Digital technology: Microprocessors or small 'chips' that convert information into numbers, digital technology enables large amounts of data to be stored and shared so that it can be accessed, created and used by people anywhere, at any time. Digital technologies are frequently networked or connected, enabling people to share, communicate, store, retrieve and manipulate digital data for education, entertainment, recreational, organisational and work purposes. There many types of digital technologies used by people in daily life include computers, tablets, smart televisions, smartphones and smart watches

eSafety Commissioner: Australia's national independent regulator for online safety. purpose is to help safeguard Australians at risk from online harms and to promote safer, more positive online experiences

Filtering: Software designed to automatically sort incoming emails into folders, block access to certain web pages, etc., according to present rules or conditions.

Interactive media: refers to digital and analog materials, including software programs, applications (apps), broadcast and streaming media, some children's television programming, e-books, the Internet, and other forms of content designed to facilitate active and creative use by young children and to encourage social engagement with other children and adults.

Screen time: A general term that includes any time a child engages with an electronic screen, including (but not limited to) watching television, engaging with educational games or creating digital books.

Sedentary behaviour: Sitting or lying down; awake but relatively inactive or stationary.

Self-regulation: The capacity for children (and adults) to regulate their behaviour in response to their emotions and thinking.

Smart toys: Similar to any other smart device in that they can interact with a person using them. Smart toys are connected to the internet, often have a microphone and/or camera, and try to mimic human intelligence. Children can ask them questions, and they respond like a chatbot.

Technology: The development of new objects or tools by people that help them in their lives. Three broad types of technology are mechanical technology (e.g. wheels, blocks, levers, gears); analogue technology (e.g. film-based photography, drawing, painting); and digital technology (e.g. mobile phones and computers).

Wearable technologies: Digital technologies that can be worn, e.g. watches, fitness tracking devices, jewellery and clothes made with electronic textiles.

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

- ACECQA: Consent and children's rights
- ACECQA: Early Year Learning and Development Framework
- ACECQA: Empowering children under 5 by asking them to give consent for photos or videos
- ACECQA: National Model Code - Taking images in Early Childhood Education and Care
- ACECQA: NQF Online Safety Guide Self and Risk Assessment Tool
- ACECQA: Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
- Early Childhood Australia: Statement on young children and digital technology
- eSafety Commissioner: eSafety's professional learning modules
- eSafety Commissioner: https://www.esafety.gov.au/
- eSafety Commissioner: Online Safety Agreement
- eSafety Commissioner: Online Safety Agreement
- eSafety Commissioner: Talking about child sexual abuse online with 0- to 12-year-olds
- The eSafety Guide: https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-issues/esafety-guide
- The Playing IT Safe Framework and Alignment: https://playingitsafe.org.au/

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RELATED POLICIES

- Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing
- Compliments and Complaints
- Educational Program
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Inclusion and Equity
- Interactions with Children
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Supervision of Children
- Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk *(Regulation 172 (2))*.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Digital communication platform safety guidelines

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Northern Bay College Early Learning Centre on 02/09/2025.

REVIEW DATE: 02/09/2026

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ATTACHMENT 1. DIGITAL COMMUNICATION PLATFORM SAFETY GUIDELINES

Using digital communication platform can be a great way for children to learn and explore, but it can also put them at risk. It is important for early childhood teacher and educators to understand the risks associated with children using the internet. The eSafety Commissioner provides early years professional learning and resources to help services in keeping children while safe online: www.esafety.gov.au

Prior to using a digital communication platform:

- Educators to complete eSafety learning module *(refer to Sources)*
- Educators to email digital communication platform guidelines and gain written consent from families
- Educators be familiar with using digital communication platform and its functions

Guidelines for educators

1. Be the host and have full control throughout the session
2. Two staff to be present online at all times
3. Dress appropriately and ensure background is presentable and professional
4. Ensure the use of the "waiting room" function so to monitor attendees
5. Decline or remove unauthorised participants immediately
6. Follow *Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing and Code of Conduct Policy* at all times
7. Use the services digital communication platform at all times with families (no personal accounts)
8. Use different meeting ID each session to reduce hacking attempts

Guidelines for families

1. The educator is the host of the Web Ex or other digital communication sessions and will have control of the meeting throughout the session
2. All participants must join with the child's first and last name for identification purposes
3. A parent/guardian to be present online at all times
4. All participants to dress appropriately
5. Unauthorised participants will be immediately by removed by the host
6. Keep private information for 1:1 discussion with the educator. If you wish to speak about a private matter, you can contact the educator via email or call to make a time to discuss the matter
7. Families are requested not to record, take photos during Web Ex or other digital communication sessions or share Web Ex or other digital communication links with others
8. We encourage families to read the eSafety Commissioner's Online safety for under 5's booklet with their child/ren as part of our commitment to keep children safe while online

Consent

I (parent's full name) _____ consent [insert child's full name]_____ to participate in Web Ex or other digital communication sessions with Northern Bay College Early Learning Centre Educators. I have read, understood and will adhere to the above guidelines.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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